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Goose & Pabooza

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GOOSE-A-PALOOZA

by

Katharine Miller

London Bridge in Mother Goose Land has fallen.

A group of children

JENNY WREN - *Reporter for WMGL*

OLD KING COLE

TOMMY - *the king's adviser*

MOTHER GOOSE

LITTLE JACK HORNER - *town council member*

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT - *town council member*

GEORGY PORGY - *town council member*

SIMPLE SIMON - *town council member*

CROOKED MAN - *town council member*

OLD MOTHER WIDDLE WADDLE

LITTLE BO-PEEP

A GENTLEMAN BACHELOR

LITTLE BOY BLUE

BLACK SHEEP

NOBLEMAN

A group of protestors

PETER PUMPKIN-EATER

JACK B NIMBLE

JACK GOOSE

HUMPTY DUMPTY

WICKED WITCH

Three fiddlers

SCENE ONE.

Lights up on small group of young children at center stage. In a circle formation and holding hands, they skip and prance in a clockwise direction while chanting

CHILDREN (*in unison*): London Bridge is falling down, falling down
London Bridge is falling down, my fair lady!

The children flop down to the ground and giggle.

Thunder rumbles. Loud creaks and the sound of tumbling bricks heard from off-stage.

The children, now panicked, rise and scramble off in multiple directions to exit the stage.

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE TWO.

Lights up on downstage right, where reporter JENNY WREN stands holding a corded microphone branded with WMGL logo.

JENNY WREN: We have just received reports that London Bridge has fallen down. Multiple sources now confirming that London Bridge has indeed collapsed. Travellers are advised to avoid the area and plan for traffic delays. We'll keep you up to date at the situation develops. This is your fair lady, Jenny Wren reporting for WMGL, Mother Goose Land.

JENNY WREN *exits.*

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE THREE.

Lights up on left center stage, where OLD KING COLE sits upon his throne. He holds a jewel-encrusted remote control and points it at an unseen television to shut it off. TOMMY, an adviser to the king, hovers at the king's side.

OLD KING COLE: Daffy-down-dilly! London Bridge falling—pish-tosh! How is that news? London Bridge falls down everyday. Bricks and stones have broken off from it and dropped into the river since I was Young King Cole. It's just a very crumbly bridge.

TOMMY: Our sources say the bridge has completely collapsed, sire.

OLD KING COLE: Well, buckle my shoe! Good riddance! It was an eyesore. And dangerous. Whose idea was it to build a crumbly bridge in the first place. Terribly unsafe. Bring me my fiddlers three!

TOMMY: Actually, sire—London Bridge is a vital thoroughfare that unites the two halves of Mother Goose Land. The loss could have a devastating impact on our economy and infrastructure.

OLD KING COLE: Way to harsh my merry. Well, then, somebody ought to do something about it.

TOMMY: You *are* the king, sire.

OLD KING COLE: Right. Send all the king's horses and all the king's men to put London Bridge together again!

TOMMY: We can't do that, sire.

OLD KING COLE: Whyever not?

TOMMY: You've dispatched them to attend to Humpty Dumpty, sire. In fact, you've routinely dispatched all of your horses and men to attend to Humpty Dumpty for years. The bridge might have been repaired and maintained ages ago had all of the kingdom's resources not been allocated to mend one accident-prone townspeople. With all due respect, sire.

OLD KING COLE: Hot boiled beans! Can I help it if my wife's nephew is compelled to perch on high walls and has an inner ear issue?

TOMMY: Shall we redirect some of your men to address the bridge?

OLD KING COLE: And risk crossing Mrs. King Cole? No-sir-ee. Her sister is a real wicked witch.

TOMMY: Might we consider calling an emergency meeting of the Mother Goose Land town council?

OLD KING COLE: Ooh! Yes! This is precisely the sort of thing they were elected to handle. Good thinking, Tommy!

TOMMY: Thank you, sire.

OLD KING COLE: And see if you can round up all those handy townsfolk... you know... tinker, tailor, butcher, spy, sailor, carpenter, maker of pie.

TOMMY: Yes, sire.

OLD KING COLE: And my pipe! Bring me my pipe.

MOTHER GOOSE *enters in an agitated state.*

MOTHER GOOSE: Cole! Have you seen the news?!

TOMMY: *(to OLD KING COLE)* Yes, sire.
(nods to MOTHER GOOSE) Good evening, Mother Goose.

TOMMY *exits*.

OLD KING COLE: Indeed. ...sad?

MOTHER GOOSE: It's a calamity! What are you doing about it?

OLD KING COLE: We're on top of it, sis. All the best people and whatnot.

MOTHER GOOSE: And supplies?

OLD KING COLE: In the supply closet?

MOTHER GOOSE: The last of our bricks and mortar went to the new deli for the butcher down the lane. We have no building supplies to restore London Bridge.

OLD KING COLE: Surely we can obtain more...that's something people can do, right?

MOTHER GOOSE: Ordinarily, yes, we receive regular imports from Fairy Tale Land. However, there is great unrest throughout their kingdoms. The knights are striking, the dwarfs are unionizing, and the witches are revolting—no wise cracks about your sister-in-law. Until matters are resolved, all trade is at a standstill. That means no bricks and mortar. No wood and clay. No iron and steel.

OLD KING COLE: Sounds pretty Grimm. Er, what about Wonderland? Can we trade with them?

MOTHER GOOSE: Don't get me started on Wonderland. They've really gone through the looking glass this time. Mad queens, mad hatters, mad dogs and Englishmen—whole place could come down like a house of cards any minute.

OLD KING COLE: Not to fret, sister dear. Our town council will soon devise brilliant solutions for Operation Fallen Arches. In the meantime, you could pop over to Fairy Tale Land on your goosey goosey gander and work your folksy charm to encourage them to put their petty squabbles aside for the sake of international commerce.

MOTHER GOOSE: Are you just trying to get me out of the way, brother dear?

OLD KING COLE: Why, no! You are our finest representative and a skilled diplomat. This is your land, after all. I'm only king because, well, someone had to be.

MOTHER GOOSE: (*sighs resignedly*) Fine.

OLD KING COLE: Brilliant! I have every confidence you'll inspire all the leaders to work together. Now, don't come back until there is peace through all the lands.
...Which will be soon, I'm sure!

MOTHER GOOSE *grumbles and mutters wordlessly as she exits.*

OLD KING COLE *presses the remote to turn on the television.*

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE FOUR.

Lights up on JENNY WREN downstage right.

JENNY WREN: This is Jenny Wren reporting with WMGL. Here with me now are several eyewitnesses and victims who were on the scene when London Bridge tumbled down.

OLD MOTHER WIDDLE WADDLE *steps up to* JENNY WREN.

OLD MOTHER WIDDLE WADDLE: (*hysterical*) The house is on fire! The grey goose is dead! And the fox has come to town, oh!

OLD MOTHER WIDDLE WADDLE *wails and scampers away.*

JENNY WREN *nods sagely.*

LITTLE BO-PEEP *joins* JENNY WREN.

JENNY WREN: Little Bo-peep, you were just about to reunite with your long-lost sheep at the time of the collapse. Can you tell us what happened?

LITTLE BO-PEEP: (*trembling*) Y-yes. I was out once again searching for my lost sheep—they'd been missing for ever so long, I almost lost hope of finding them. I'd just come to the west entrance to London Bridge when I spied my flock galloping towards me across the bridge. I went to meet them, but— (*pauses to bravely suppress tearful emotion, dabbing a tear with a lacy handkerchief*) Suddenly, there was a rumbling, like an earthquake, that shook the bridge so hard it began to crumble. The roadway started to fall away and I watched helplessly as my sheep were pulled down with the rubble. I just... I ran for cover. I couldn't bear watching ...those poor little lambs drifting down, down, down ...petrified pillows. ...It ought've been me! (*quietly sobs into her handkerchief*)

JENNY WREN: What should have been a triumphant reunion turns tragic. Thank you, Miss Bo-peep.

LITTLE BO-PEEP *nods solemnly while stifling her sobs and walks away.*
A GENTLEMAN BACHELOR *joins* JENNY WREN.

JENNY WREN: And you, sir? How were you impacted by the bridge's untimely collapse?

GENTLEMAN BACHELOR: I was just a modest bachelor, constantly battling rats and mice that were getting into my home and stealing my meat and bread. I could hardly make a decent sandwich. So, I came to town to get myself a wife. Lots of pretty maids around here, I'd heard. The streets and lanes were in such a state that I needed to get a wheelbarrow to cart my new bride home. We were just crossing to the east side of the bridge when a flock of sheep came galloping past, giving me such a startle, I lost control of the wheelbarrow and it was swept up in the thundering herd. Before I could regain composure, the sheep, wheelbarrow, and bride were tumbling down towards the river and then swept up in the current.

JENNY WREN: Truly distressing.

GENTLEMAN BACHELOR: Tell me about it. I paid four and twenty sixpence for that wheelbarrow.

The GENTLEMAN BACHELOR stuffs his hands in his pockets and whistles nonchalantly as he walks away.

JENNY WREN: Rescue efforts are underway as townsfolk desperately try to locate and reunite with loved ones. Ships are sailing between the east and west ports to transport commuters and supplies across the river. Three men in a tub are working tirelessly to sift through the rubble for survivors. if you have a sailing vessel of any sort—a humble dinghy, a sporty schooner, or a hollowed out potato, the town council urges you to row, row, row your boat down to the site to help with recovery. Jenny Wren, WMGL.

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE FIVE.

Lights up on downstage left. The council — LITTLE JACK HORNER, GEORGY PORGY, CROOKED MAN, SIMPLE SIMON, LITTLE MISS MUFFETT — sits around a conference table, their emergency meeting already in progress.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: So, we must act urgently to repair the London Bridge as quickly as possible. The king beseeches us to devise solutions to our current manpower and supply woes.

CROOKED MAN: For every evil under the sun, there is a remedy or there is none.

GEORGY PORGY: The king should redeploy his horses and men to attend to the bridge rescue and rebuilding efforts. Why must the people of Mother Goose Land be further burdened because the king's nephew is a bad egg? Many townsfolk are victims here and shouldn't be expected to labour through their suffering.

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: Perhaps if you spent less time kissing girls and making them cry, you mightn't be afraid of getting your hands dirty, Georgy.

GEORGY PORGY: Big talk from someone who sits on her tuffet all day.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: Unfortunate as it is, I second the motion to call on our hardiest townsfolk to help rebuild.

GEORGY PORGY: We have no bricks and mortar, no wood and clay. Shall we ask the townspeople to dismantle their chimneys and donate the bricks to make the bridge?

SIMPLE SIMON: Oh no! What would Santa Claus come down on Christmas?!

LITTLE JACK HORNER: We shan't dismantle homes for the sake of the bridge.

CROOKED MAN: When the wind is in the East, 'tis neither good for man nor beast.

GEORGY PORGY: Always the straight shooter, Crooked Man. There has been talk amongst the noblemen of East Mother Goose Land to secede. Perhaps we ought not be so hasty to rebuild. We do have boats after all.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: You don't think the noblemen purposefully destroyed London Bridge? This is not the time to sow division and suspicion amongst our neighbours.

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: We haven't any evidence of malice. We need to remain focused on unity and healing.

SIMPLE SIMON: Oh! I know of a house in Fairy Tale Land made out of gingerbread and gumdrops and all kinds of candied sweets! Wouldn't it be marvellous to have a bridge made of lollipops and fondant and meringues?

CROOKED MAN: If all the world were apple pie, and all the sea were ink; if all the trees were bread and cheese—what should we do for drink?

SIMPLE SIMON: Or link sausages? The butcher just got in a bunch of little piggies from the market.

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: *(sarcastically)* Why not use curds and whey?

GEORGY PORGY: I know a guy who could get us a deal on a crusty sourdough.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: Let's dismiss all foodstuffs as potential building materials. We must think in terms of durability. Meat would rot. Bread would mold. And curdled milk simply would not hold.

SIMPLE SIMON: *(pointing at ceiling, cheerfully exclaims)* Spider!

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: *(panicking)* What?! Where?!

A spider drops from the ceiling. LITTLE MISS MUFFETT shrieks and scrambles out of her chair, then runs off stage.

SIMPLE SIMON *picks up the spider and holds it up to his ear, nodding and whispering back as the other council members look on.*

SIMPLE SIMON: Itsy Bitsy here suggests we use spider webs to repair the bridge. He says he's sure other spiders through the land would spin day and night to build the strongest bridge to rival anything Little Isambard Kingdom Brunel could design.

The rest of the council members murmur interestedly.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: I've certainly run into some impressive cobwebs in my time.

GEORGY PORGY: Little Miss Muffett will never approve, however. You saw the way she tore out of here.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: Quite right. I do believe many of our townsfolk are similarly afflicted with arachnophobia. Simon, please relay to Mr. Bitsy our sincerest regrets. Perhaps in a more enlightened time we can better integrate webs in our landscape.

SIMPLE SIMON *confers with the spider.*

SIMPLE SIMON: He's disappointed, but he understands. While he's here, he'd like to register a complaint about local water spout design. Too many times he and his friends have climbed up the spouts only to be washed away during the lightest of rain showers.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: We'll certainly take that under advisement.

The SPIDER reels himself back up to the ceiling

GEORGY PORGY: There's always the royal forest, you know.

CROOKED MAN: You can't see the forest for the trees.

SIMPLE SIMON: But we can saw it for the wood!

LITTLE JACK HORNER: A fine idea. If the king grants his consent, we'll have the local lumberjacks start timbering immediately.

LITTLE JACK HORNER *taps his gavel on the table, accidentally banging it on his enlarged, purple thumb.*

GEORGY PORGY: You really ought to have that thumb looked at, Jack Horner.

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE SIX.

Lights up on downstage right, where JENNY WREN stands surrounded by townsfolk, LITTLE BOY BLUE, a BLACK SHEEP, and a NOBLEMAN.

JENNY WREN: As the Mother Goose Land council continues to deliberate the supply issue, townsfolk are offering up their own suggestions for novel materials to use in repairing the bridge.

LITTLE BOY BLUE: Haystacks are where it's at, man. They're firm, they're fluffy, and there's lots of 'em all over the farms. I fell asleep in one a few days ago...best nap of my life. *(toots his trumpet)*

BLACK SHEEP: Wool. I've got tons of it. Well, three bags full so far. It's extremely versatile. Knitting, felting...

NOBLEMAN: Build it up with a lot of hot air, says I! We noblemen of the east say nay to rebuilding that atrocious bridge.

JENNY WREN: But sir, many of your fellow townsfolk have been displaced by the bridge's collapse. Merchants have lost their shops. Captains have lost their ships. Three little kittens lost their mittens and now wait to be reunited with their mother across the river. Peter Pumpkin-eater's pumpkin shell was crushed by falling debris and now he's in danger of not being able to keep his wife.

NOBLEMAN: I cannot be troubled with other folks' strife. I have wealth to build, land to tend, and mine own lady accustomed to a finer way of life. I'd not wager my last tuppence on seeing a new London Bridge in this era.

The townsfolk exit.

JENNY WREN: As Operation Fallen Arches remains in peril, recovery efforts are ongoing. Volunteer divers have just rescued a man from St. Ives, his seven wives, forty-nine sacks, 343 cats, and 2401 kittens. A heroic feat, indeed. Stay tuned for more as the situation develops here at the site of the former London Bridge. This is Jenny Wren, reporting live for WMGL.

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE SEVEN.

Lights up on left center stage and OLD KING COLE sitting upon his throne, puffing on his bubble pipe and gleefully watching the bubbles drift and pop.

TOMMY *enters with a bundle of scrolls.*

OLD KING COLE: Ah, Tommy! What news have you for me?

TOMMY: We have called upon the good townsfolk of Mother Goose Land to volunteer for Operation Fallen Arches, sire.

OLD KING COLE: Yes?

TOMMY: We've received numerous regrets from those unavailable to heed the call.

OLD KING COLE: Twiddlum-twaddlum! Who dares defy the king of Mother Goose Land?!

TOMMY: *(unfurls one scroll and reads from it)* Old Grimes is dead.

Doctor Foster went to Glo'ster. The walrus and the carpenter are laid up with food poisoning. Tom-Tom, the piper's son, is down the Old Bailey for stealing a pig.

Gregory Griggs is combing his twenty-seven wigs.

The cow jumped over the moon. And the dish ran away with the spoon.

OLD KING COLE: See-saw Margery Daw! This won't do. Bring me a list of *willing* townsfolk.

TOMMY: The old woman who lives in the shoe pledges her children to join.

OLD KING COLE: Bless that old Mary. If I had as many children as she, I simply don't know what I'd do. I hope some of them are handy with a hammer.

TOMMY: *(unfurls another scrolls and reads it)* The council is requesting permission to cut the royal forest for wood.

OLD KING COLE: No! My precious trees! I have such fond memories—climbing them, kissing beneath them, watching cradles rock in the treetops... What about that fellow's idea about the haystacks? Why do we have such an abundance of hay anyway?

TOMMY: Hay is for horses, sire.

OLD KING COLE: And I suppose you'll tell me the horses then might graze upon the bridge and we'll just have to rebuild again.

TOMMY: Yes, sire.

OLD KING COLE: Fiddlesticks! Ooh, build it up with fiddlesticks.

TOMMY: Sacrificing a portion of the royal forest would be viewed favourably by the townsfolk. The latest polls show your approval rating is much lower since people learned about Humpty Dumpty monopolizing the royal resources.

OLD KING COLE: Don't they understand? We wouldn't want to risk the ire of my wicked witch-in-law swooping in here with dragons and brimstone befouling our farmland. What kind of nursery rhyme would that make? Not a very merry one, I'll say. But I have received word that Humpty is on the mend and my men may be free to sneak away to lay some bricks.

TOMMY: We don't *have* bricks, sire.

OLD KING COLE: The chimney idea was a no-go with council?

TOMMY: What would Santa Claus climb down, sire?

OLD KING COLE: Beanstalks?

TOMMY: After the kerfuffle with the giants, sire?

OLD KING COLE: Santa Claus! Giants! Wicked witches! Must these outsiders stir up trouble in my idyllic countryside? It was my sister's doing you know. Her son Jack got mixed up in magic beans and riled up those giants. Did you know Mother Goose was almost Mrs. Claus? Ho-ho! What a different land this might be.

TOMMY: Speaking of trouble—the noblemen of East Mother Goose Land are using this bridge incident to further their goal of separating from West Mother Goose Land.

OLD KING COLE: Those fancy lads are more blustery than a March morn. I'd bet my last thruppence they'll get no farther than a hippo on a penny farthing.

TOMMY: On the subject of money, sire— (*unfurls another scrolls and reads*)
Might you consider dipping into the royal coffers to distribute silver and gold to the displaced residents and merchants who lost their homes and livelihoods in the bridge collapse?

OLD KING COLE: Pish-tosh! Who puts buildings on bridges in the first place? What a silly notion to live on a bridge. No, they knew the risks.

TOMMY: But, *sire*.

OLD KING COLE: Oh, all right! Put it to the council to address relief fundraising and I'll match whatever they're able to raise.

TOMMY: Yes, sire.

OLD KING COLE: And fetch me my bowl!

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE EIGHT.

Lights up on downstage left. The council — LITTLE JACK HORNER, GEORGY PORGY, CROOKED MAN, SIMPLE SIMON, LITTLE MISS MUFFETT — are still seated at the conference table. LITTLE MISS MUFFETT, spooked by her earlier encounter with the spider, holds her parasol extended over her head and occasionally sneaks nervous glances to the ceiling

LITTLE JACK HORNER: Next on the agenda—fundraising ideas for victims’ relief. Shall we hold a gala at the palace?

GEORGY PORGY: ‘Twould be expensive to arrange. And besides, the palace is on the west side of the river and the noblemen in the east are all against the raising of London Bridge. They’re out protesting right now. Mary, quite contrary, has formed a human barricade at the former entrance onto the bridge with pretty maids all in a row.

CROOKED MAN: Birds of a feather flock together, and so will pigs and swine.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: Can Mother Goose meet and reason with them?

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: She remains in Fairy Tale Land, trying to broker peace throughout their kingdoms so that we may resume trade.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: Have the noblemen reasonable cause for protest?

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: My constituents in East Mother Goose Land want what we all want—a safe community in which to raise children, less poverty, and an end to corruption and naughtiness.

GEORGY PORGY: What has the bridge to do with any of that?

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: The rise in beggars in recent years has many worried. The beggars cross the bridge and, well...

GEORGY PORGY: We’d have fewer beggars if noblemen shared their wealth.

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: If wishes were horses, beggars would ride. Preferably far away from here.

GEORGY PORGY: Who are these noblemen anyway? In West Mother Goose Land, every Tommy, Jack, and Mary know the tradesmen of our town—the farmer in the dell, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker. But what place do the noblemen hold in Mother Goose Land? Have they paid most handsomely to keep their names out of the mouths of babes? Who here can name one nobleman?

The council hems and haws, murmuring and shrugging amongst themselves, unable to come up with a name.

GEORGY PORGY: See, there's no rhyme or reason for them. Seems we could get along without them just fine. But I wouldn't dare give those ignoble men the satisfaction of not rebuilding London Bridge.

SIMPLE SIMON: I once met a batman and a spiderman down along the lane. One wore a cape and one wore a web and both claimed to be noble heroes in search of bad guys and candy.

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: *(panicking)* A spider man?

LITTLE JACK HORNER: I fear we've strayed far from the issue at hand. We ought to help the beggars, yes, but we must first think of the victims of the fallen bridge. How can we help them?

SIMPLE SIMON: A bake sale? I met a pieman with some tasty wares.

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: We could ask the Pat-a-Cake bakery for cake and buns. Oh! Do you know the muffin man?

SIMPLE SIMON: The muffin man on Drury Lane? He's got a nice selection of muffins—gooseberry and plum.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: Plum pie would get a thumbs up from me!

CROOKED MAN: Sing a song of sixpence, a bag full of rye.
Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie.
When the pie was open'd, the birds began to sing,
Was not that a dainty dish to set before the king?

LITTLE JACK HORNER: Old King Cole *has* been less merry about pastries of late.

GEORGY PORGY: I could set up a kissing booth in town. Thruppence a smooch.
Pretty maids for a penny.

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: We don't want to make *more* people cry.

GEORGY PORGY: I haven't heard any complaints yet. How about a telethon, then?
A televised fundraising talent show is sure to get loads of townspeople involved. If we could convince WMGL to donate airtime, folks could demonstrate their talents and victims could share their stories. We might even get donations from beyond Mother Goose Land.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: What a superb idea! All in favour?

COUNCIL MEMBERS (*in unison*): Aye!

LITTLE JACK HORNER *taps his gavel on the table*.

LITTLE JACK HORNER: It'll be a Goose-a-palooza! What a good town council are we! Let us adjourn to our homes and practice our talents.

GEORGY PORGY *puckers his lips at* LITTLE MISS MUFFETT, *who recoils*.

SIMPLE SIMON: I can finally perform my magic act!
(*to CROOKED MAN*) Is that a crooked sixpence behind your ear?
Pull my finger.

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

GOOSE-A-PALOOZA

SCENE NINE.

Lights up on JENNY WREN downstage right. A NOBLEMAN stands beside her. A group of PROTESTORS loiter in the background with anti-bridge picket signs.

PROTESTORS (*chanting in unison*): Hark, hark, the dogs do bark. The beggars are coming to town! Some in jags, some in rags, and some in velvet gown!

JENNY WREN: Protesters continue to gather on the east side of former London Bridge. Joining me is the gentleman leading the movement.

NOBLEMAN: (*pulling the WMGL microphone towards him*) The time has come for us to eliminate the nanny state and embrace good self-governance!

JENNY WREN: (*regaining control of her microphone*) Have you met with the king to propose your plan?

NOBLEMAN: We've informed his merriness of our intentions and he has not invited our contingent to the palace for talks. If only Mother Goose had married Santa Claus! Cole would be far better suited to blowing bubbles at the North Pole. Until Old King Cole resigns, none shall pass into New Mother Goose Land!

The NOBLEMAN gives JENNY WREN a dismissive wave and rejoins his band of PROTESTORS.

PROTESTORS (*chanting in unison*): We're all jolly boys and we're coming with a noise!

JENNY WREN: As tensions mount here in Mother Goose Land, the king and town council push on with their rebuilding efforts. Tonight, exclusively on WMGL, we'll begin broadcasting a live 48-hour telethon to raise monies for the London Bridge victims. Townsfolk are encouraged to come sing a song, dance a baby diddit, or answer our phones as we collect relief funds for those who need it most. Stay tuned. Jenny Wren for WMGL.

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE TEN.

Lights up on left center stage and OLD KING COLE sitting upon his throne, sipping from his bejewelled bowl.

OLD KING COLE: *(responding to television report)* Resign? A king doesn't simply resign! Oh, this is making me quite unmerry, indeed.
(calls out) Tommy!

TOMMY *enters*.

TOMMY: Yes, sire?

OLD KING COLE: Tell me you have good news.

TOMMY: Alas, sire, I bear none. A large storm is on the horizon and its winds are already threatening rescue efforts in the river. Boughs are breaking, cradles are falling.

OLD KING COLE: Hobbledy-hoy! These vexations are taking a toll on my merry old soul. How handy it would be to have a catchy chant or jingle to tidily resolve our troubles. *(clears throat and grandly gesticulates as he recites)* Rain, rain, go to Spain and come again when it's more convenient for me. *(slumps back into throne)* Needs work. Pity no one ever rhymed about a sultry sorceress. Just a bunch of dumpy old hags. Say, is Mother Goose back from once upon a time in a galaxy far, far away yet?

TOMMY: Mother Goose has not returned from Fairy Tale Land, sire. She is expected back tomorrow.

OLD KING COLE: I suppose we oughtn't wait for her. Someone must deal with those troublesome noblemen trying to wreak havoc in my kingdom. Send for Solomon Grundy to liaise with them.

TOMMY: Solomon Grundy, sire?

OLD KING COLE: Yes. born on a Monday, christened on Tuesday, married on Wednesday—Solomon Grundy.

TOMMY: He took ill on Thursday and a turn for the worse on Friday. Died on Saturday, buried on Sunday. That's all I know about Solomon Grundy, sire.

OLD KING COLE: Hot boiled beans! Will my burdens never cease? Alright, send Jack.

TOMMY: Which Jack, sire?

OLD KING COLE: Jack. *Jack!* How many Jacks do you know?

TOMMY: Little Jack Horner, Jack-a-Nory, Jack-a-Dandy, Jack B. Nimble, Jack and Jill, Jack Sprat, and Frere Jacques.

OLD KING COLE: (*exasperated*) Jack, my nephew. Jack Goose! Dispatch him to East Mother Goose Land posthaste! He's a plain-looking lad. He is not very good, nor yet very bad—just the sort we need in this situation, now I think about it.

TOMMY: Yes, sire.

OLD KING COLE: And fetch some good news to lift my spirits.

TOMMY: I'll do my best, sire.

TOMMY *exits*.

OLD KING COLE: Oh, for the days when the biggest excitement was when the balloon went to the moon. A real three-fiddle day that was!

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE ELEVEN.

Lights up on downstage right. JENNY WREN stands in front of a telethon sign with a running total of donation pledges.

LITTLE BO-PEEP and PETER PUMPKIN-EATER stand behind JENNY WREN, looking melancholic while applauding politely.

JENNY WREN: That was Peter Piper picking a peck of pickled peppers. Coming up, Little Tommy Tucker will sing for his supper and Little Boy Blue will come blow his horn. We have a heartwarming story of three little kittens reunited with their mittens and their mother after disaster struck. Now in our 16th hour of the Operation Fallen Arches Relief Fund Telethon, we've so far raised two thousand pounds for the victims of the London Bridge collapse. Thanks to your generous contributions, fellow townsfolk like Little Bo-Peep and Peter Pumpkin-eater can start to rebuild their lives while Mother Goose Land rebuilds the bridge.

JENNY WREN turns to LITTLE BO-PEEP and PETER PUMPKIN-EATER and gives them a sympathetic look.

JENNY WREN: We'll hear more about their tragic losses later. But first, Jack B Nimble demonstrates his extraordinary candle trick.

JACK B NIMBLE enters, loudly humming a thrilling action theme. As he continues humming, he makes a big show of setting a large candle on the stage, pulling a matchbook out of his pocket and striking the match, lighting the candle, and preparing to leap over the lit candle. He tests the wind, gives a couple of test hops, then very gingerly steps over the candle. He bows with flourish, blowing out the candle in the process, then rushes off stage.

JENNY WREN: Stay tuned to the WMGL Operation Fallen Arches Relief Fund Telethon and keep those pledges coming in. Operators are standing by for your call.

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE TWELVE.

Lights up on OLD KING COLE watching the telethon.

OLD KING COLE: Two thousand pounds! My, aren't our townspeople generous?

TOMMY: Don't forget, sire, you've promised to match those donations.

OLD KING COLE: Did I? (*chuckles*) You don't suppose some of those pledges are fake, do you?

TOMMY: We should hope not, sire.

OLD KING COLE: Hmph. Right, right, right. The public approves of helping the needy. Are we certain I need the support of the public?

TOMMY: Mother Goose is on her way back from Fairy Tale Land. She adores the public.

OLD KING COLE: Mother Goose, right. (*under his voice*) More like Mother Noose...

TOMMY: Pardon, sire?

OLD KING COLE: I'm feeling very much the Wednesday's child, Tommy. Hasn't anyone good news for me?!

JACK GOOSE *enters*.

JACK GOOSE: Hiya, Uncle King Cole!

OLD KING COLE: Jack Goose. What now? Have the noblemen successfully seceded?

JACK GOOSE: Why, there's no trouble with the noblemen at all. Haven't you heard? London Bridge has been completely restored and the noblemen have no recollection of protesting. Did mamma wave her golden goose wand or something?

OLD KING COLE: This is splendid news! Who knew our handy townsfolk could work such magic?! And with that storm coming...well, huzzah!

HUMPTY DUMPTY *enters, heavily bandaged and hobbling*

OLD KING COLE: Humpty? What brings you here?

HUMPTY DUMPTY: Hello, Uncle King Cole. I wanted to offer an apology to you and to the good people of Mother Goose Land for monopolizing the town's resources for so long. All the king's horses and all the king's men have worked very hard to put me back together again and again. I just felt tremendously guilty when the bridge collapsed. When they patched me up this time, I went to my mother—the wicked witch who lives in a cottage in the haunted woods beyond Mother Goose Land—and told her of your kindness. She was so moved by your efforts to look after me, she came here under cover of night and magically restored London Bridge to its former glory, with better materials to withstand time and elements.

WICKED WITCH *swoops in.*

WICKED WITCH: I also cast a spell to change that dreadful London Bridge prance. Now two children must act as a drawbridge, with their arms raised as other children pass under like silly boats, until one gets captured or crushed when the drawbridge arms drop at the end of the song. Children can be so boring and tiresome. You're welcome!

OLD KING COLE: My dear sister-in-law, you have saved Mother Goose Land!

MOTHER GOOSE *enters.*

MOTHER GOOSE: Hickety pickety! What's the cause for this grand family reunion?

OLD KING COLE: My wonderfully witchy sister-in-law has restored London Bridge and peace throughout our fair Mother Goose Land!

MOTHER GOOSE: How wickedly convenient! The kingdoms of Fairy Tale Land have settled their grievances as well. We're set to receive a large shipment of bricks and mortar tomorrow.

OLD KING COLE: Magnificent news! Pipes and bowls for everyone! And fetch my fiddlers three!

GEORGY PORGY *and* LITTLE MISS MUFFETT *enter carrying a giant novelty check from the telethon. They bow and curtsy to the king*

GEORGY PORGY: Greetings, your majesty! Mother Goose!

OLD KING COLE *looks jovial but perplexed at the new arrivals.*

TOMMY *whispers to the king*

OLD KING COLE: Ah, yes! Members from our town council. My, but that's a large check you're holding.

GEORGY PORGY: Indeed, your majesty! Through our telethon and a generous donation from the folks of Cloud Cuckoo Land, we managed to raise a whopping five thousand pounds!

GEORGY PORGY *presents the check to* OLD KING COLE, *who accepts with trepidation.*

OLD KING COLE: *(looking squeamish)* Good heavens!

LITTLE MISS MUFFETT: We passed by the bridge on the way over from the TV station. The handymen certainly worked fast! It looks almost entirely as it did before it fell!

OLD KING COLE: *(to WICKED WITCH)* The bridge...it's completely as it was before?

WICKED WITCH: Like the whole incident never occurred.

OLD KING COLE: So...no victims?

WICKED WITCH: Well...Little Bo-peep is unlikely to see her sheep again, but everything else seems in order.

OLD KING COLE: Huzzah!

OLD KING COLE *moves to tear up the giant check, but TOMMY intervenes and puts the check out of reach.*

The THREE FIDDLERS enter and play a tune as the crowd whoops and shouts and dances little jigs. A few of the revellers demonstrate the new London Bridge drawbridge game. ITSY BITSY SPIDER drops from ceiling and bounces around. LITTLE MISS MUFFETT panics and GEORGY PORGY moves in to comfort and protect her from the spider.

OLD KING COLE *watches the festivities from his royal throne. WICKED WITCH moves to OLD KING COLE'S side..*

WICKED WITCH: Such a pity my darling sister isn't here to see all this.

OLD KING COLE: Quite. Funny—I can't recall when I saw her last. (*scanning the throne room*) Now, where is Mrs. King Cole?

WICKED WITCH *whispers in his ear. OLD KING COLE looks panicked and sick.*

WICKED WITCH *cackles with delight as she places the queen's crown on her head.*

A chorus of children's voices echo through the palace.

CHILDREN (*in unison*): Ring around the roses,

Pocket full of posies.

Ashes, ashes—

We all fall down!

Thunder rumbles. The sound of creepy children giggling reverberates.

Everyone on stage collapses.

BLACK OUT.

END OF SCENE.

GOOSE-A-PALOOZA

About Katharine!

Katharine is the author of *Defying Conventions*, the best-selling *30 Failures by Age 30*, and the author-illustrator of *BORIS: Robot of Leisure*. Katharine's also an artist and graphic designer specializing in low-brow pop art inspired by 20th century popular culture. Katharine's paintings, part of her Robot of Leisure series, have been exhibited in galleries and public spaces across North America. View more of her work at thatkatharine.com.